1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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778 History" (Vol. XVIII, p. 443, Fig. 176). Fig. 44 shows a small Gros Ventre specimen attached to a thong, for wear around the neck. The entire stone is tightly incased in a piece of skin which preserves the form so closely as to be scarcely noticeable. At the lower end of the stone is a small fringe of skin. Skin and thong are painted over red.

BELIEFS ABOUT THE DEAD.

775 Dead people go to a barren region in the north. People have been there, but the ghosts are invisible. The dead are often heard whistling, speaking, and calling about human habitations; houses and tents may be closed, but still they are heard. They speak as a living person would, and people in return ask them questions. When at war, people often ask the ghosts what luck they will have, or where the enemy are. The dead always tell the truth, and, if they say one of the party will be injured, it always happens. The ghosts are never seen, but only heard. Sometimes, if a medicine-man asks one of his spirits to bring him a dead relative, the door is heard moving, and after a time the spirit returns with the dead person, who, when he is asked questions, answers. Every one who is present can hear him plainly. Sometimes, on the arrival of the person, a noise like the whirring of wings is heard. Then there is a tapping at the top of the tent-poles. Then the tapping moves about the tent. Now it may be at the door, now at the back of the tent. When a ghost or spirit is seen, as occasionally happens, it is only for a glimpse.

If a man keeps a tooth or a bone of a dead person, after a time the spirit of that person appears to him. Some ghosts lie, but some are truthful. A man who controls a ghost, or a medicine-man who has a spirit, can see it; but it is invisible to other people. It is summoned only in the dark. People who have lost horses bring a pipe to a man that has a spirit, and pay him. Then he calls his spirit, and it tells where the horses are. If people try to ascertain by the help of a medicine-man where they have lost a small valued object, the spirit may throw it at them. Stolen property is found in the same way. A ghost or spirit is called "untrue person."

159 An old man who has been several times quoted tells the following: "I
775 once died. I think that Above-Nix'a"t pitied me, and let me live to be an old man. I was very sick with cramps and fits. The camp was moving, and the last I remember was that the tents were being pitched. Then I knew nothing about it; but the people were mourning for me and had put paint and my best clothes on me. I was travelling. I went north until I came to the Cypress Hills. There on the hills I saw two bears going into

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their holes, in which they had fires. I started to go around where they were, but when I came abreast of their holes one of the bears pursued me and caught me by the leg. I turned and seized it by the ear, and saw that it was a very small bear. Then I continued on my way, the bear clinging to my thigh, and I holding its ear. I went on until I came to a creek where there was an enormous camp, the largest I have ever seen, stretched as far as I could look up the creek. Those in advance were just setting up their tents. I went to the first tent I came to, which was a large one. A number of naked men were sitting there, each of them with some weapon. By the door a woman sat cooking. The men called out to her to catch me, that they would eat me. I ran out, and she after me. She caught me by the robe, but I loosened myself and ran back. Then my relatives, who were kissing me, noticed that I was breathing, and said, 'He is alive.' Then I recovered my speech, but I was still out of my senses. They told me later that I argued with my relatives, insisting that I had brought a bear, and asking them where it was. The next day, when my senses returned, the back of my thigh itched where the bear had been. Still later, when I had more nearly recovered, I saw the tent in which I was, full of people that I could not recognize. Then I lost my senses once more, and became so strong that they could not hold me. It was a long time before I entirely recovered. All this happened to me while I was still a young man, soon after I was married."

An old man tells that once he was going from one camp to another at night, when suddenly he heard a humming of a stone like a bullet, which struck in front of him. He was frightened, but did not run. Another stone flew over his head so close that he felt the wind it made. Then he ran.

On another occasion he was mourning for one of his sons. In the evening he went to one of his friends. It was already dark, and he had to pass through the brush. Then he heard a noise as of canvas being dragged over the brush, and there was loud whistling. He was not frightened, but stopped and said, "You should pity me. I am mourning." Then it shouted "Yes" loudly, and the noise stopped.

At another time he saw a ghost's light. An old man who had died had been buried in a tree. The narrator with six other men was driving horses past that they had captured, when they saw a flame on the dead body.

A man tells how he was once in an isolated tent, far from any camp. He was leaning against a tent-pole listening to those in the tent who were talking and smoking. Suddenly, close by his ear, there was a loud whistle which made him jump to his feet. The others all heard it also, and asked, "Who was that?" Going outside, they could find no one, and knew that it had been a spirit.

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775 An old man relates that he once saw something that he thought was a spirit. In full daylight he was hunting horses, and came on a ridge where there were a few pines, while below there was a flat and a stream. Down there he saw a dead cottonwood aflame and a person by the tree who was burning it. Limbs fell down burned off. He thought that it was some one from his own camp who was burning the tree; but he lay down and watched. The person took a fallen limb, carried it to the stream and threw it in, and he could hear it splash and hiss. He saw this a second time and a third time, but, happening to turn his head, when he looked back there was no one there. He waited for some time, but the person did not reappear. Going to the stream, he saw the burned branches and the tree still afire.

[821] The Milky Way is called tsöökanibyaa^{n} ("ghost road"). The dead travel by it.

MYTHOLOGICAL BELIEFS.

776 Bax'aa^{n} is the name of the water-monsters inhabiting rivers, as well as of the thunder. The water-monster is also called byiiça^{n}. It is the enemy of the thunder. This idea is common in the Plains tribes, and it seems probable that the relation into which the thunder and the water-monster were brought through this general idea of the opposition between them, is what has resulted in one name being applied to both of them by this tribe. The description of the water-monster is the usual one. It is long, snake-like, and black, with a long head and turned-up nose and horns. It causes the death of all persons who drown.

That persons drowned are taken by a bax'aa^{n} is believed the more because the monsters are said to have hands like a person. As they have long, sharp teeth, and are known in one recent instance to have eaten a buffalo, it is supposed that they eat the persons whom they drown.

773 776 A hunting-party once saw a water-bax'aa^{n} being carried away through the air by a cloud which extended downward toward the earth. They saw the monster writhing, and turning its tail.

A hunting-party once killed a buffalo at the edge of a river. They were cutting the meat when they saw waves approaching the buffalo. The water rose and was pushed toward the buffalo until it covered it. Then the water receded, and they saw a water-monster lying eating the buffalo. One of the men said he would kill it. The others urged him to desist; but he shot, and struck the animal between the eyes. Then, as it writhed, he declared he would despatch it with his knife. Again they tried to dissuade him; but he said, "I have come to seek death, and am not afraid." Taking his double-edged knife, he killed the monster, and dragged its tail out of the

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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buried with its owner. For a woman, her clothing, and sometimes even her pots and pans, were put with her body. It was stated explicitly, however, that food was never placed with the body by the Gros Ventres, although it was recognized that the Assiniboine did so. 764

A widow would burn the things of her husband which were not placed with his body nor taken by his relatives. She would then be smudged with sage and, should she have kissed the corpse, her mouth was smudged four times and she was made to spit each time. 768 783

These practices were seemingly tied up with two beliefs,—the first being that if objects were not placed with the body, the deceased would return to look for the things valued in life; the second, that the recently deceased try to lure the living to join them. The first point was explained by Mary, whose mother had told her: "Everyone likes his own things and some hate to leave them when they die. That is why we used to put personal belongings with the corpse. It might be that there is some one thing that a person wants which has been 'left behind,' so he will come back to seek it. Sometimes when you are alone you might hear a rattling of the dishes or a whistling sound, and you would know that it was some loved one who had died and who was looking for something." 764 775

As proof of the second point, the following experience was offered by Singer. "When I was ill during a smallpox epidemic, I had a dream. I dreamed that my sister, who had died in this same epidemic, appeared to me and said: 'Our mother wants you. Come with me.' My father, who was actually nursing me, seemed to be standing to one side. He told my sister: 'You have had no pity on us. You didn't fight for life. What are you coming after her for? You go by yourself.' But pretty soon my sister came again and said: 'Now this time I want you to come because our mother wants you.' So I agreed: 'All right. I will go with you.' My sister took me to a shabby-looking little old lodge and I didn't feel right about going in there but I thought: 'Well, to please them I will look in there anyway.' There was someone there in bed and my sister was toward the back of the lodge and my mother was on the other side. My mother told me: 'Here, sit by your sister.' She 775 787

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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787 began to dig around behind her bedding and brought out a bowl
775 such as that in which buffalo chips are pounded into powder. She said: 'Here. I want you to eat this.' It didn't look good to me and I just kind of felt it with my fingers. Instead of having sat by my sister as my mother had directed, I had remained by the door, because I felt kind of scared in some way. So I told them: 'Wait. I guess I will go out a minute. I will be right back.' But I got out of there and ran home as fast as I could go—back to my own bed, back to myself. If I had eaten what they had given me that would have been the last of me! After this dream I got well."

Mourning

765 As soon as word was circulated that someone had died, all rela-
152 tives of that person, especially the women, were supposed to gather as soon as possible to cry and mourn for the deceased. Very close kin were expected to show their sorrow at the death of a loved one not only by crying and wailing, but also by casting off their good clothes and donning old ones,—robes, for instance, consisting of pieces of old discarded lodge covers, or ordinary robes that were rough and worn,—and by cutting the hair.[7] This latter was truly
[302] a great sacrifice, for to the Gros Ventres one of the chief criteria of beauty, in men and women alike, was extreme length of hair. The hair of younger children in a family was spared, even at the death of parents, but should, say, a father die, the hair of the older daughters was shorn, though not cut so short as that of the widow.
[588] An elderly woman was usually called upon to do the cutting and the widow, guided by the strength of her emotional reaction, would indicate how short she wished her hair to be. It was said that some widows would leave their hair relatively long, just free of the shoulders, while others " when they felt too badly, had all their hair cut off, almost as men now wear their hair."

Close kin were accustomed to further show grief by going off to the hills and fasting, crying aloud as they wandered about alone, and sleeping out without shelter. A parent would have done so at the loss of a son, one spouse at the death of the other, or a sister for her deceased brother. Such mourners would stay out

[7] For this and other practices in mourning, see Kroeber, 1908, p. 181.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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776 reward and punishment for such human behavior exclusively or almost exclusively in this life. At death the souls of all except [775] murderers went to the same spirit habitat, not to the Supreme Being.[13]

The extensive cultural and ethico-social activities of man towards the Supreme Being will form the subject of succeeding chapters. We may merely state here that the Supreme Being easily held the first place in cult, as compared with other beings, and that he bulked large in the Gros Ventre ethico-social conscience.

776 That the foregoing concept of the Supreme Being was aboriginal 194 with the Gros Ventres and not the result of borrowing from white sources seems clear beyond reasonable doubt from both the external and internal evidence.

First the external evidence. While the Gros Ventres have been known in our literature since 1751, their contacts with the whites before the middle of the last century were relatively slight. They met traders and trappers and an occasional intermarriage with [797] whites occurred, but active missionary work among the Gros Ventres did not begin until 1884.[14]

Of about twenty different informants from whom we gathered our account of the Gros Ventre Supreme Being concept, most were older people, men and women, between the ages of 60 and 90 (in 1938-40) and all of them were positive, from their own memory of pre-missionary days and/or from what they had always heard from their parents or grandparents or other elders, that the belief was part of ancient native tradition and not one derived from the whites or from missionaries. For instance, Bull Head, about 80 years old in 1940, then the oldest living Gros Ventre man, stated that he had known about the Supreme Being as far back as he could remember. Coming Daylight, then about 85, and of

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[13] The older name for the abode of the dead was tsɔtci:tăn (etymology unknown to informants) but described as "toward the sunset." The more common name was ba:snabe (big sand) which was described as a place [821] "to the north." The Milky Way was called Ghost Trail according to another tradition. No non-human supernatural being was conceived of as in charge of the future abode or as rewarder or punisher of the dead for earthly deeds.

[14] Cf. Flannery, 1953, p. 23.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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long, more or less serpent-shaped, being with pointed snout and tail, and with a horn or two horns in its forehead. It lives in its lodge under water, is occasionally seen, snatches bathers or swimmers, and carries them down to its underwater dwelling. Drowned persons are supposed to go to or to be captured and held by the water monster in the after-life. The people made offerings to the water monster or to its youngest offspring, the Last Child (see p. 15), when crossing rivers and on other occasions.

There is a close connection between Bha'a the Thunderbird on the one hand, and these water and earth monsters on the other, but they are quite distinct. During storms the Thunderbird may strike a monster and carry it away as game food up into the clouds to its own mountain-top nest. There is no explicit note of hostility toward the monster.

The following story may illustrate ways of the water monster and the Thunderbird's habit of preying on the water or earth monsters.[11]

When The Boy's father, Lame Bull, was a young man in the 1840's, three young Gros Ventre younger than Lame Bull,—two of them relatives of Lame Bull,—had gone on a war party down toward the Yellowstone River. The Boy told the story: "They ran before the oncoming storm to take refuge among the rocks on a knoll. When they got within about 100-150 yards of the knoll, lightning struck. All three lost consciousness for a moment and, when they came to, were facing the opposite way. They turned around to go to the rocks on the knoll. As they did so, they saw a cloud right over the knoll and heard a noise as of a struggle going on in the clouds. The cloud started to rise and as it left the ground they could see something hanging down from the cloud, with its head in the cloud. As the cloud went up higher, they could see that the something was some kind of monster, with colors like a snake and striped. The cloud rose higher and higher, seeming to be taking a great monster out of the knoll. Finally the lower end of the monster came into view, struggling as it were. The struggling monster was immense, snake-like in build

[11] Cf. also Kroeber, 1908, pp. 278-80.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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and who was floating on the raft with the Flat Pipe, whether he may then have gone to the whites and taught them, too, how to pray; but all this he considers speculation only.

It should be emphasized that as previously noted, no sacrifices or prayers were ever offered by the Gros Ventres to Ni:hohat himself, nor, it may be here added, to Earthmaker. The Boy once said to his father, Lame Bull: "You talk so much about Ni:hohat. He was a superhuman. He should have been prayed to." "No," Lame Bull replied, "he never told the people to pray to him, but told them to pray to the Supreme Being. He was a man and not worthy to be prayed to."

Earthmaker was the human being, apparently a or the primeval keeper of the Flat Pipe, who knowing the earth was to be covered with water made a raft of logs on which he and the Flat Pipe floated during the great flood.[22] (See full story, No. 3 in Appendix.) Where he came from is unknown. Landing on a mountain top he there made dry land (not *the* earth, the terrestrial globe as such which already existed), and also made a man and woman. He gave the Flat Pipe into the keeping of the man he had made, and taught him the Flat Pipe rite, instructed him how to carry out the rite and to plant tobacco, and told the people how to worship the Supreme Being. The Flat Pipe rite has been known ever since that time. Earthmaker is mentioned only in the Flat Pipe rite. After giving the pipe and the above instructions, he disappeared, and what became of him, whether he died or not, is not known.

Ghosts were called tsë:k. Another name for ghosts was byi'te:' a word that "gives the impression like a hollow-eyed bleached-out skull." An occasional ancestral ghost became the guardian helper of a surviving relative.[23] Gambling power might also be gotten from a ghost. Most ghosts were in their own future abode and did not have any contact at all with the living. In general, apart

[22] He was not floating in the Pipe bowl; this is the Arapaho version.

[23] In 1948 The Boy explained: "Tciya:tawu:nitan (see p. 19) are not tsë:k; tsë:k is the opposite of everything good—you can cuss by calling someone tsë:k. Byi'te:' is even worse. The ancestral ghost is tsätsuwa'a, not tsë:k. Shadow, soul, spirit, echo is batato:u. [R.F.]

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In general, apart from the ghost helper and gambling power complexes, to be described later, no cult of ghosts existed, and no prayers or food or other offerings were made to them. Ghosts of those who had committed unjustified murder, as defined by the Gros Ventre code, did not go where the other souls went, but stayed where their bodies lay or wandered around and "bothered" the living. If a person suffered a stroke, a ghost, apparently of a murderer, was thought to have caused it and to have twisted the victim's face or mouth and pulled the eyelid down.

Ghosts "bothered" the living in less serious ways, appearing in the shadow and disappearing, whistling, playing tricks, in more recent times rapping on windows, and so forth. The two following stories, told by The Boy in light vein and laughingly, illustrate ghostly ways.

"A war party of brave Gros Ventres started out.[24] Toward evening they came to a timbered stream and made a lodge of willows near a good-sized tree, not knowing that a couple had been buried there. After a good meal, they were singing and enjoying themselves, when they heard someone hollering far off. The hollering kept coming closer and closer to their camp until it got very near. One of the men said: 'We had better start up a fire.' Before anyone got up to fetch wood, wood began being thrown into the tepee. This kept up until the tepee was so loaded up with wood that they were crowded out. They then started to carry the wood out of the tepee. One man remarked: 'I never heard of a ghost killing anybody.' Then they heard the ghost laughing a little distance off. One of the men shot toward the spot from which the laughing was coming, but the ghost laughed all the more. All the men then got back inside the tepee, and one of them said: 'I'll get some wood and we'll make some tea.' A good fire was started, and the old fellows prayed with the pipe. The ghost was meanwhile moving the embers away to keep the fire from burning. Before the snow was fetched to be melted, snow fell from the open center top of the tepee and put the fire out. At this they got scared and said: 'Let's move from here.'

[24] In 1948 The Boy remarked that this happened in Lame Bull's life time; and that the ghost referred to in the story is the kind known as tse:k. [R.F.]

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All of them, bunched close together, ran away, and they could hear the ghost laughing. They shot at it but it laughed all the more. When they got a good distance from their camping spot, they could still hear the ghost laughing behind them, and it only quit bothering them when they got far away. Whenever a war party came close to this spot, it would be bothered by that ghost, whose name was 'Hole-through-his-penis.' So the Gros Ventres quit camping there."

The second illustration was given as follows: "On one occasion, during the lifetime of Lame Bull (The Boy's father), a number of Gros Ventres went off on a war party and camped at an old abandoned winter camp on the Missouri River. They made a shelter frame of old tent and travois poles. One of the men went out some distance, gathered wood and lit a fire and started to cook meat. The night was very dark. Something started throwing sticks at him every now and then. He thought to himself: 'My friends are trying to test my courage,' and paid no attention. The sticks began coming too frequently. He said to them: 'You better quit throwing at me. You might hurt me. You can't scare me.' They said: 'We're not throwing at you.' The sticks came faster. So he ran back to the shelter where the others were, rushed in and hid behind the leader of the war party. They all got scared then and piled up in a struggling heap close to the leader until he was pinned under them. 'Let me up,' he said, 'I'll see what is scaring you and deal with that thing.' The ghost poked in a cross piece of a travois and scattered their fire. While still piled up in a heap they heard a voice laughing outside and seeming to go away. They at last got straightened out and fixed up the fire, but still could hear the ghost laughing. One of the men, Chief Grass, said: 'I'm going to kill that ghost.' He then rolled some buffalo hair around the head of an arrow, singed it a little and spat on it,—his way, it was believed, of using his power. He then shot the arrow in the direction where the laughing could still be heard. The voice was at once silenced, and they were not bothered any more that night. 'I believe I killed that ghost.' Chief Grass said, 'at daylight, I'll look around.' The next morning they looked around and found a bleached human skull with the arrow of

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Chief Grass in one of the eye sockets. So it was always thought that he had killed that ghost."

There was a considerable fear of these bad ghosts who "bothered" or even seriously harmed human beings. Certain other ghosts were merely "earthbound," that is, they lingered around or came back because they were fond of their belongings—clothing, footwear, and so forth—which were buried with them. Such earthbound ghosts did no harm to human beings and were not supposed to be feared.[25]

Singer, then married to Crooked Arm, told of an occasion on which she ran away from her home. She wandered around at random and happened to stop at the spot where her sister was buried, and heard a voice [presumably her sister's] saying: "Just lie quiet. They are all looking for you." She did so, apparently without fear.

One informant, Al Chandler, narrated certain experiences of his early childhood and boyhood that suggest a somewhat deviant attitude toward ghosts. When he was about four years old, his mother died, and the morning after her burial he went to the grave and lay there, falling into a profound sleep. Not long after this, when his uncle died, and the body was laid on a bed in a lodge some distance off, he went to the lodge and crept under the blanket covering the body and went to sleep. Another time, while still very young, he got lost and around dark found himself at a place where there were a number of old graves. He lay down and slept the night there. These incidents were early childhood ones, when he hardly realized the meaning of death. At a later age, during his boyhood, everybody was afraid to go along a certain bit of woodland lest the ghosts bother them. Al wanted to find out for himself. So against advice of his father, and feeling a little "spooky," one night just after midnight he went through the stretch of brush and as he did so heard a sound behind him as of someone dragging a robe over gravel. Mustering up his courage he turned around quickly and saw a big old owl dragging its feathers and scarcely able to fly. When he got back home, he told his venture, and the old man [his father] laughed and said: "Owls

[25] For illustration, see Flannery, 1953, p. 203.

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sure will do that; they bother people and mock you when you talk or laugh." After that there was no ghost in that piece of brush. 775 [825]

On another occasion, Al was coming back on horseback with a group after a hand game. In a gap through which their route would take them, the others saw a yellow or blue light, like a lamp in the dark, moving this way and that. But Al could see nothing. The others went home by a roundabout way, but Al went alone through the gap, saw nothing, and met the others farther on.

Many, though not all, ghosts had the habit of whistling, and some talked in a whistling language.

Ghosts were apt to appear as owls or to hoot like owls, both in the shaking tent rite, to be described later, and on other occasions as illustrated in the following story which had been told The Boy by his father, Lame Bull.

"Lame Bull went on a war expedition. Seven Sioux were killed. Their bodies were left laying where the killing took place. A few years later Lame Bull and some comrades came near this place. As they reached it, seven owls flew from it. The owls did not fly away but just milled around the spot. They were the seven Sioux turned into owls." [825]

Children used to be told: "If you do not obey, the owls will catch you." If owls alighted on a lodge or house or hooted around very near on bush, tree or hill, this presaged the death of some one. Owls also gave warnings.[26] In these instances however we got no evidence that the owls were conceived of as ghosts. 825 775

Besides the ghosts there were other bad spirits, who "shot" people by projecting some small object into the body of a person and so causing illness.[27] This belief, we were told, was very widespread but we did not obtain many details regarding it. The following incident, narrated by Coming Daylight, may serve as illustration. 776 753

On one occasion when Coming Daylight was living where Fort Belknap now is and when her daughter was still a sack baby, the latter would not quit screaming. She would hold her head to one side and would not nurse, and they could not satisfy her with

[26] An example is given in Flannery, 1953, p. 93.
[27] Very probably connected with practice of witchcraft. [R.F.]

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
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791 in use to designate those who had a ghost helper: of him or her
787 it was merely said: "He (or she) has a tsatsawâ·'a."

Persons who had a ghost helper commanded great respect, and were bothered by no one. But capable medicine men on whom the people depended to doctor their sick were also greatly respected. My informants did not feel that either class of practitioners as such had greater prestige than the other.

787 In the shaking tent rite, no other spirits than the given ghost
776 had any part, and only the one ghost ever had part in a given performance. Neither guardian spirits, nor the "Little Spirit," nor Ba'a', nor the Supreme Being (I^{s}teib^{i}n^{i}'a'^{t}'^{a}; the a before t nasalized) enters into it in any manner. The summoned ghost came not from any of these or their abodes, but from Basna'^{a}be'^{c},
[775] the Big Sand, whither the souls of all Gros Ventres, except murderers of their own tribesmen, went after death and lived.

The function of the ghost helper was to give knowledge about past, present, future, or distant happenings, and counsel and direction in illness or danger. He imparted information. He did not as such grant power. Some of the many things he would be questioned about were: How a war expedition under way or an impending battle, or an illness, would come out? Where were the enemy located and what were their plans? Who had stolen a certain valuable article and where was it? He was not asked questions about trivial or silly matters, or about the fidelity or infidelity of a wife, although he sometimes volunteered information on such things. If some noted or loved person were critically ill, the ghost helper might be summoned and if it said: "His (the sick person's) soul is already over there," this meant he was going to die.

787 Where the services of one who had a ghost helper were desired,
791 the usual procedure was for the client or clients to go to him (or her) and offer him a pipe to smoke—this in accordance with general Gros Ventre practice in enlisting the aid of anyone with any kind of power. Those who had ghost helpers were commonly reluctant or even afraid to summon their helper; after the performance they felt tired and sore. But if given a pipe to call the